DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 065 SO 014 950

AUTHOR Okuda, Shinjo
TITLE Improvement of Curriculum Standards in Japan - Revision and Enforcement of the Course of Study.
INSTITUTION National Inst. for Educational Research, Tokyo (Japan).
REPORT NO NIER-01/83
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 22p.; For a related document, see SO 014 949.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; Centralization; Comparative Education; Core Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Evaluation; Decentralization; Educational Administration; Educational History; Educational Improvement; *Educational Objectives; Educational Planning; *Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; School District Autonomy; State School District Relationship; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Japan

ABSTRACT

The paper provides an overview of the educational system in Japan, focusing on revisions made since World War II to realize the national commitment to free, compulsory, and equal education. Efforts taken to balance nationally established academic requirements with local and regional needs are given special attention. The information is presented in six sections. The general organization and sequence of the national curriculum are established in section 1. Educational objectives are broken down for each of the following academic levels: elementary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and higher education. Charts included in this section show the average number of hours devoted to each discipline by grade level. To better understand the present Course of Study, section 2 outlines past measures taken to adapt Japanese education to changing socio-economic conditions. The four major curriculum revisions between 1947 and 1969 are detailed, noting rationale, objectives, and components of each. Sections 3 and 4 concern the present Course of Study, established in 1977. The text of this revision, which outlines the need to develop more independent thinking in a more humanistic academic environment, is paraphrased. The findings of a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education to determine how objectives of this program were being met are presented. The remaining two sections address procedures for implementing standard revisions at the local level, and descriptions of in-service training to ensure implementation. (LP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

NIER OCCASIONAL PAPER 01/83

ED236065

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Hiroshi Kida
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IMPROVEMENT OF CURRICULUM STANDARDS IN JAPAN

— REVISION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE COURSE OF STUDY —

SP 014 950

Section for Educational Co-operation in Asia
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH OF JAPAN
5-22 Shimomeguro 6-chome, Meguro-ku, Tokyo.
March 1983

N O T E

This paper was prepared originally in Japanese by Professor Shinjo Okuda at Yokohama National University for translation into English for dissemination under the NIER's Information Services Programme among Unesco Mmeber States in Asia and the Pacific.

I. CONCEPT OF THE CURRICULUM

1. *Outline of the School System*

The Japanese Constitution stipulates in Article 26 that "All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided for by law. All people shall be obligated to have all male and female children under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free." It is clearly stated in the Constitution that Japanese people not only have the right to receive education but also are obliged to have their children receive education. This is a situation rarely found among other countries.

Japan is a parliamentary democratic nation. Therefore, all laws are to be established in the Diet by the representatives of the people. Among the various educational laws, including the laws on school education, social education and educational administration and finance, the Fundamental Law of Education is the most basic, and the School Education Law exists to stipulate general matters concerning school education.

According to the School Education Law, a single-track system of school education divided into elementary (6 years), lower secondary (3 years), upper secondary (3 years) and university (4 years) education is enforced. (See the organization of educational system chart.)

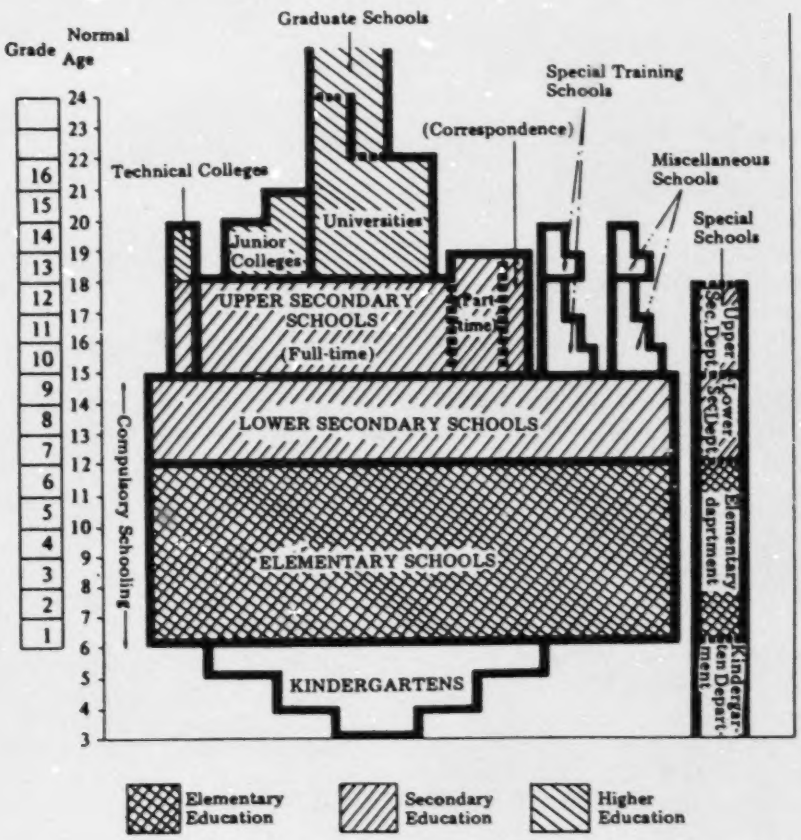
2. *Curriculum Organization*

All the elementary, lower, and upper secondary schools are obligated to organize a curriculum according to the related educational laws and the Course of Study, taking into consideration the present situation of school and local district conditions as well as the level and characteristics of student mental and physical development. (The same holds in the case of schools for the blind, deaf, and handicapped.)

Each school compiles a curriculum and educational plans to fulfill the school educational objectives. The curriculum should be in accordance with the mental and physical development of the students, and plans should be synthetically organized in relation to the school hours.

Given this concept of curriculum, the following three items

Chart 1 ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM



are the main factors in curriculum formulation:

1) Establishment of the educational goals of the school,
2) Organization of educational content, and
3) Arrangement of school hours for the subjects in the curriculum.

(1) Objectives of School Education

In order to realize the concept of education mentioned in the Constitution, the general objectives of education are indicated in the Fundamental Law of Education, and the School Education Law specifies the objectives and educational goals for each school level.

The Fundamental Law of Education stipulates the following general objectives:

"Education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the development of people sound in mind and body,

who shall love truth and justice, esteem the value of the individual, respect labour, have a sense of responsibility, and be imbued with an independent spirit, as builders of a peaceful state and society." (Article 1)

On the other hand, the School Education Law stipulates the following objectives for each school level:

Elementary School shall have as its aim to provide a general elementary education to promote the development of mind and body. (Article 17)

In elementary school education, efforts shall be made to attain the objectives set forth in the following paragraphs in order to realize the aim stated in the preceding Article:

(1) To cultivate a proper understanding about mutual relations among human beings and the spirit of co-operation, self-dependence and self-control, through experiences of social life in and out of school,
(2) To develop a proper understanding about the present state and the traditions of the local community and the nation and further to cultivate the spirit of international co-operation,
(3) To develop basic understanding and skills in respect of clothing, food, housing, industry, and other matters that are essential in everyday life,
(4) To cultivate the ability to understand and use correctly the Japanese language that is essential in everyday life,
(5) To develop the ability to understand and manage correctly the quantitative relations that are essential in everyday life,
(6) To develop the ability to observe and deal rationally with the natural phenomena that occur in everyday life,
(7) To cultivate the habits necessary to live a healthy, safe and happy life and to realize a harmonious development of mind and body, and
(8) To cultivate a basic understanding and skills in music, fine art, literature, etc. that add depth and richness to life. (Article 18)

Lower secondary school shall have as its aim to provide a lower secondary general education to continue the development of mind and body based on the foundation laid at elementary school. (Article 35)

In lower secondary school education, efforts shall be made to attain the objectives set forth in the following paragraphs in order to realize the aim stated in the preceding Article:

(1) To cultivate the qualities necessary for being members of society and the nation, attaining the objectives of elementary school education more thoroughly,
(2) To cultivate a basic knowledge and skills for vocations

required in society, an attitude of respect to work and the ability to select one's future course according to one's individuality, and
(3) To promote social activities in and out of school, to guide the emotions properly and to cultivate the ability of fair judgement. (Article 36)

Upper secondary school shall have as its aim to provide an upper secondary general education and technical education to continue the development of mind and body based on the foundation laid by lower secondary school education. (Article 41)

In upper secondary school education, efforts shall be made to attain the objectives set forth in the following paragraphs to realize the aim stated in the preceding Article:

(1) To cultivate the qualities necessary for being able members of society and the nation, developing and expanding the results of the lower secondary school education,
(2) To enable the students to decide on their future course according to their individuality and with an awareness of their missions to be fulfilled in society, to enhance the level of their general culture and to have them well versed in technical skills, and
(3) To cultivate broader and deeper understanding and the ability to make sound judgements about society and to endeavour to firmly establish their individuality. (Article 42)

In accordance with the present situation in the school district and the school's physical and personnel conditions, it is necessary for each school to establish concrete educational goals based on the school education aims stipulated by the related laws.

(2) Organization of Educational Content

As for the educational content of each school level, the School Education Law gives the Minister of Education, Science and Culture the authority to determine such content. This is because school education involves public responsibility and the government must assure the adequacy of public education. It is particularly necessary for the government to ensure that national standards for public education are maintained. For this purpose, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture is authorized to establish curriculum standards on the basis of laws established by the Diet. As stipulated by law, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture publishes the curriculum as part of the Enforcement Regulations of the School Education Law, as follows:

The elementary school curriculum shall be organized with each subject in Japanese Language, Social Studies, Arithmetic,

Science, Music, Arts and Handicrafts, Homemaking and Physical Education, Moral Education and Special Activities. (Article 24)

The lower secondary school curriculum shall be organized with compulsory Subjects, elective Subjects, Moral Education and Special Activities.
2. Compulsory Subjects shall be Japanese Language, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Music, Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education, and Industrial Arts and Homemaking; elective Subjects shall be Music, Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education, Industrial Arts and Homemaking, and Foreign Languages as well as such other specially necessary Subjects as prescribed in the Course of Study for Lower Secondary Schools under the provisions of Article 54-2.
3. Such elective Subjects as mentioned above shall be offered with due consideration for the realities of the region and the future courses and characteristics of the students. (Article 53)

Thus, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture Regulations specify the guidelines of curriculum formulation and the subjects to be included, all for the purposes of organizing educaticnal content. Furthermore, the objectives and content of each Subject are designated by the Course of Study, which is a notification of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

(3) Distribution of School Hours

The standard distribution of school hours for each Subject, Moral Education, and Special Activities is stated in the Enforcement Regulations of the School Education Law. The standard number of school hours for each Subject is presented in Tables 1 and 2. Here the figures indicate the annual standard school hours assuming that the mininum number of weeks in the school year is 35. Each school uses this standard to decide the school hours with necessary modifications. In most cases, these annual standard school hours are divided by 35 and the hours per week are obtained for each Subject. Then, a weekly schedule from Monday through Saturday is made. At elementary school, one school hour consists of 45 minutes, while at lower secondary school it is 50 minutes.

3. *Course of Study*

Elementary and lower secondary school education are compulsory, involving public responsibility (Articles 4 and 6 of the Fundamental Law of Education). It is therefore required that certain educational standards be maintained throughout the nation, so that all people have equal opportunity to receive education of the same quality. In other words, to carry out the educational objectives and goals indicated in the Fundamental Law of Education, the government must ensure standardization of the curriculum organized and enforced at

each school to the extent required for national standards.

On the other hand, it is very important that education be conducted effectively in accordance with the actual situation of the school, local conditions, and the characteristics of student mental and physical development. The effectiveness of educational activities at each school depends mainly on the creativity and originality of the school and its teachers.

Table 1. Standard Number of School Hours for Each Subject and Others (Elementary School)

Classification		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Number of School Hours by Subject	Japanese Language	272	280	280	280	210	210
	Social Studies	68	70	105	105	105	105
	Arithmetic	136	175	175	175	175	175
	Science	68	70	105	105	105	105
	Music	68	70	70	70	70	70
	Arts and Handicrafts	68	70	70	70	70	70
	Homemaking	-	-	-	-	70	70
	Physical Education	102	105	105	105	105	105
Number of School Hours for Moral Education		34	35	35	35	35	35
Number of School Hours for Special Activities		34	35	35	70	70	70
Total Number of School Hours		850	910	980	1,015	1,015	1,015

Table 2. Standard Number of School Hours for Each Subject and Others (Lower Secondary School)

Classification		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Number of School Hours for Compulsory Subjects	Japanese Language	175	140	140
	Social Studies	140	140	105
	Mathematics	105	140	140
	Science	105	105	140
	Music	70	70	35
	Fine Arts	70	70	35
	Health and Physical Education	105	105	105
	Industrial Arts and Homemaking	70	70	105
Number of School Hours for Moral Education		35	35	35
Number of School Hours for Special Activities		70	70	70
Number of School Hours for Elective Subjects and Others		105	105	140
Total Number of School Hours		1,050	1,050	1,050

Thus each school must adhere to national standards while adding originality in curriculum organization in order to satisfy local requirements.

On the basis of these ideas, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Japan serves as the headquarters for establishing and implementing the Enforcement Regulations of the School Education Law. Articles 25 and 54-2 of the Regulations stipulate that each elementary

and lower secondary school must use the Course of Study published by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture as the standard for curriculum formulation. Thus the Minister of Education, Science and Culture publishes the Courses of Study for elementary and lower secondary schools.

The Course of Study provides each school with the basis for concrete teaching plans and programmes. Nevertheless, the Course of Study only provides a general standard which each school applies flexibly. In forming the curriculum, each school is allowed to give consideration to the situation of the school and local conditions so that the curriculum will be as suitable as possible and match the developmental level and experience of the students.

A Course of Study is provided for each school level, i.e., each of elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools. The first part of the Course of Study contains general provisions concerning the school as a whole. In the second part, the objectives, content, and remarks about the content through the grades are presented for each Subject and grade level. In the third part, the objectives and content of Moral Education are presented, followed by the objectives, content, and methods of Special Activities.

II. REVISION OF THE COURSE OF STUDY

1. *Improvement of Curriculum Standards*

As previously mentioned, in Japan, the standard curriculum for elementary, lower and upper secondary schools are made by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and each school organizes its own curriculum according to these national standards. Therefore, when a revision of the standards is made by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, all school curriculums throughout the nation change. That is, the whole system of school education is affected by a revision.

As for the procedures of revision, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture first asks the Curriculum Council, an advisory body, to deliberate principles and basic ideas for the revision, and the Council carefully investigates and discusses the matters involved. Finally, the Council submits a report to the Minister. Then, on the basis of this report, the Minister takes the necessary actions in revising the curriculum standards, which involve revisions in the related laws and the Course of Study.

The Curriculum Council consists of 60 members, including scholars, researchers, teachers, principals, and educational administrators.

In addition, from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Director in charge of school curriculum, school supervisors and subject specialists of the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau sit on the Council.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture takes the next step by forming "Committees of Cooperators for the Revision of the Course of Study" for each Subject, Moral Education, and Special Activities. Each committee inspects the related part of the Course of Study and makes its own proposals. Each committee consists of 20 scholars, researchers, teachers, and school advisors from the board of education.

In the 30 years since the end of World War II, four revisions of the Course of Study have been made. (At the upper secondary school level, the curriculum has been revised five times.)

2. *Main Issues Involved in Each Revision*

(1) The First Course of Study

The first Course of Study introduced in 1947 consisted of two parts - the first devoted to the general principles, and the second to specific Subjects such as Japanese Language, Arithmetic, etc. It was composed with the help of the U.S. Occupation Army and reflected the occupation policy. The main features were as follows:

1) Morals (*shushin*), Japanese History and Geography were abolished, and Social Studies was introduced.

2) Homemaking was newly included.

3) Independent Study was also newly included.

4) The school hours for each Subject were given in the form of annual total numbers, assuming that the school year was to last for 35 weeks, and the weekly total of school hours was also indicated.

(2) 1951 Revision

The first Course of Study was compiled in a very short time under the urgent need of educational reformation after the war. Great inadequacy resulted in an overall revision in 1951 to improve the Course of Study. The following are the main points of revision.

1) Calligraphy was introduced in the fourth grade curriculum as part of Japanese.

2) Independent Study was converted to Extra-Curricular Activities

with the objective of carrying out various activities that could not be handled in ordinary Subjects. Examples were also given.

3) School hours for each Subject were indicated by the ratio to the total school hours so that the curriculum could be implemented flexibly.

The Course of Study for Social Studies was revised in 1953, resulting in the systematization of geography and history education. The content of each year programme was also clarified.

(3) 1958 Revision

The occupation ended in 1952, and Japan became independent. As an independent nation, the government had to provide curriculum standards suitable for the nation. For the purpose, the related laws were revised, curriculum standards were presented clearly, and each school was obligated to observe the standards strictly. After this revision, the Course of Study became a notification of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issued separately for elementary, lower and upper secondary schools. The details of this revision are as follows:

1) The four areas of Subjects, Moral Education, Special Activities, and School Events were established for the Course of Study.

2) The minimum number of yearly school hours for each Subject and Moral Education were clearly designated.

3) Moral Education was emphasized, and it became mandatory to teach it once a week.

4) To stabilize fundamental knowledge, the content of Japanese Language, Arithmetic and Mathematics was discussed and school hours for them were increased.

5) To upgrade science and technology education, the content of Arithmetic and Science was expanded.

6) Geography and history education were improved.

7) Development of artistic sense, and health and safety education were improved.

8) Consistency in the curriculums for elementary and lower secondary schools was strengthened.

(4) 1968 and 1969 Revisions

Daily life rapidly improved, and cultural and social expansion was quite striking in the 1960's. At the same time, Japan's place and role in international affairs became more important than before. It was thus necessary to revise the content of education to meet the demands of the times. The Course of Study for Elementary Schools was revised in 1968 and that for Lower Secondary Schools in 1969. Common changes in the two Courses of Study are as follows:

1) The Course of Study consisted of three parts: the first part dealt with Subjects, the second, Moral Education, and the third, Special Activities. (Special Activities and School Events in the previous version were combined.)

2) School hour designation was changed from "minimum" to "standard" numbers.

3) It was made clear that elementary and lower secondary school education was to be based on the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law, aiming at developing fundamental skills and knowledge necessary for character formation and creating a base for the development of good citizens.

4) For the purpose of character formation, a harmonized and unified Course of Study was designed. Students were to acquire fundamental knowledge and skills, improve their health and physical strength, and develop the foundations of judgement, creativity, emotional enrichment and a strong will. They were also expected to increase their understanding of and love for their nation and society.

5) The content of the Course of Study for Elementary Schools was selected very carefully considering the entire 9-year of compulsory education so that the elementary school curriculum would contain basic appropriate matters. On the lower secondary school level, individualized instruction was emphasized to cope with the character, abilities, and individuality of students. In addition, "modernization" of the content was also aimed at.

III. BASIC IDEAS INCORPORATED IN THE PRESENT COURSE OF STUDY

Since the revision of the Course of Study in 1968, school education in Japan has developed rapidly, resulting in a compulsory education attendance rate of almost 100%. In 1973, more than 90%

of lower secondary school students advanced to upper secondary schools. Problems remained as to how to cope with this situation and how to facilitate the harmonization of knowledge, morals, and physical development. In November 1973, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture asked the Curriculum Council for advice on the revision of curriculum standards for elementary, lower and upper secondary schools, and the Council submitted its report on the matter in December 1986.

In this report, the Council suggested that the curriculum revision should be made to promote development of the ability in students to think by themselves and make good decisions. At the same time, the Council considered it necessary to emphasize the following matters in the revision:

1) Developing warm-heartedness in students,

2) Providing for a more relaxed, satisfactory school life, and

3) Further providing for the acquisition of important basic knowledge and the adapting of education to the personality and ability of each student.

On the basis of these recommendations by the Council, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture not only revised part of the Enforcement Regulations of the School Education Law in July 1977, but also carried out a thorough revision of the Course of Study for elementary and lower secondary schools. The main objective of this revision was to rectify the existing situation, in which there was too much emphasis on the mere transmission of knowledge. The following principles were observed in this revision.

1) For the purpose of developing warm-hearted children who can develop knowledge, morals, and physical strength in a well-balanced manner, moral and physical education were emphasized. For this purpose, the following points were to be strictly observed:

a) Students should develop creative knowledge, skills, and the ability to think by themselves.

b) They should develop a strong will and an independent spirit.

c) They should increase their love for nature and human beings.

d) They should develop sound attitudes toward work.

e) They should develop sociability based on an awareness of social solidarity and a spirit of service.

f) They should develop love for their family, native town, and

country, and they should also become trustworthy, respectable citizens of the world.

2) The content of each Subject was to be carefully chosen so that the students could acquire basic subject knowledge and develop creativity. Continuity in the content of each Subject was to be maintained from elementary school through lower and upper secondary school. In addition, careful selection of basic material in each Subject was to be made for each Grade in the hope that students would be taught the right material at the right time.

3) To make school life more relaxed and satisfactory, the standard school hours for Subjects were reduced and flexibility in school hours was allowed depending on the situation of the school and the local area. On the elementary school level, two hours per week cut in Grade 4 and four hours in Grades 5 and 6. On the lower secondary level, four hours per week were reduced in all grades. The difference in school hours caused by the reduction was to be creatively devoted to educational activities suitable for the school and the local district, provided that a reasonable amount of relaxation was achieved in school life.

4) The objectives and content of each Subject designated in the Course of Study were limited to essential matters, allowing each school and teacher to fully employ self-developed, original instructional methods. With the Course of Study serving as the standard curriculum, each school was to develop a curriculum suitable for the school and its district, taking into consideration the mental and physical development of the students, as well as their ability and aptitude. At the same time, the study load was to be appropriately reduced.

The present Course of Study for elementary, lower and upper secondary schools was compiled on the basis of the above principles. Each school is supposed to organize and implement a proper curriculum, using the Course of Study as the standard. According to this Course of Study, new textbooks, which serve as the main teaching materials at school, have been edited and approved. These new textbooks were put into use from April 1980 at elementary schools, and from April 1981 at lower secondary schools. As for upper secondary schools, students in Grade 1 began using new textbooks in April 1982, and students in Grade 2 will begin in 1983, while students in Grade 3 will begin in 1984.

IV. PRESENT ENFORCEMENT OF THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE REVISED COURSE OF STUDY AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture carried out a survey on how the principles of the new Course of Study have been followed at elementary schools throughout the nation. This survey was conducted at 2,016 elementary schools, or one-twelfth of the total number of elementary schools in Japan. The purpose of the survey was to determine how creative educational activities were being carried out in Grade 6. Such activities were to have been introduced in the "extra time" created after the number of school hours were reduced in the new Course of Study. An outline of the results is presented below.

1) Uses of "extra time"

94.1% of the schools have been using the extra time for special activities unique to the schools. 43.6% of the schools increased the time of rest and school lunch using the extra time. Only 1.4% of them are not using it at all.

2) Main objectives of special activities carried out at the initiative of each school.

The majority (73.7%) of schools gave "improvement of health and physical strength" as the objective of such special activities, followed by "enrichment of emotions", given by 65.4% of schools. Other responses included the following:

Developing a desire to work (62.0%)

Developing such abilities as those to think, make judgements, and express oneself, and developing a desire to study as well as basic scholastic ability and creativity (44.3%)

Developing practical sociability, including awareness of social solidarity and the spirit of service (43.4%),

Developing a strong will and independent spirit (36.0%), and

Developing love for their native cities and towns (22.5%).

3) Details of original special activities

The particular special activities carried out by schools at their own initiative are as follows:

Activities concerning sports and health (86.2%)

Raising animals and gardening (67.6%)

Music activities (45.4%)

Activities concerning annual school events (33.5%)

Various activities involving self-expression and appreciation (30.6%)

Consultation on learning and daily life (30.5%)

Creative art activities (28.8%)

Activities to expose pupils to nature (27.8%)

Reading activities (26.7%)

Activities taking advantage of the characteristics of the local area or to learn about it (26.0%)

Public service activities (24.4%)

4) Length of the unit school hour

59.8% of the schools allotted 45 minutes for the unit school hour just like the unit school hour before the revision. 30.9% of them increased the school hour by 5 minutes from 40 to 45 minutes. 5.1% used both 40 and 45 minute periods, depending on the kind of activity. Only 1.3% of the schools allotted 40 minutes.

5) Changes in the length of recesses

66.3% of the schools made no changes, while 31.3% increased the length of recesses.

6) Changes in the time for school lunch

In Japan, most schools have a school lunch programme to teach pupils good eating habits and nutrition. As for the school lunch time, 73.9% of the schools did not change it, while 25.6% increased its length.

This kind of survey has not been carried out with lower and upper secondary schools. It seems, however, that lower secondary schools have also been making efforts to put original ideas into practice to make school life more relaxed and satisfactory.

V. INSTRUCTIONS AND ADVICE FROM LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION

In Japan, the largest administrative units of prefecture number 47. Each prefecture is further divided into cities, towns, and villages, which are about 3,400 in total. Each administrative unit of prefecture, city and village has a board of education which is responsible for educational administration. The local board of education provides instructions and advice on the curriculum of the schools in its area. According to the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration, the local board of education must stipulate local curriculum standards suitable for the current situation of the area and issue detailed principles for implementing the local standards, without violating the national curriculum standards. Accordingly, each school must follow the locally stipulated standards and principles, as well as the Course of Study, i.e., the national curriculum standards, when compiling and implementing its curriculum.

As for the procedures in introducing the principles of the curriculum revision, the prefectural board of education first organizes a lecture meeting at which the principles of revision are explained. Conferences on the new curriculum are also held to investigate and discuss the principles of the revision. Then, a handbook or collection of data is made to inform schools of the principles and other important matters. Sometimes, school advisors and specialists working for the board of education visit schools to give instructions and advice directly. In addition, such in-service training activities as lectures, study meetings, and workshops are held to train teachers in establishing school educational objectives, investigating teaching materials, introducing new methods, improving teaching plans and programmes, and coping with other educational problems.

Each prefecture and big city has an education centre or an in-service training centre for teachers where the above-mentioned lecture meetings and in-service training activities are conducted with the help of the board of education. This kind of centre also carries out research on the use of audio-visual aids and educational equipment for the improvement of teaching methods and skills. Such centres are contributing to the development of new materials, teaching equipment, and innovative teaching methods and plans by providing active in-service training for teachers. In this way, the prefectural and local boards of education and the education centres have been playing a vital role in the enforcement of the revised Course of Study.

VI. IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

The value of education always depends on the performance of teachers at school. Needless to say, the quality and ability of teachers must be constantly improved. Especially when curriculum standards or the Course of Study is revised, it is very important for teachers to understand the principles of the revision and to improve their teaching ability. It is no exaggeration to say that in-service training has never been as necessary as it is today.

For this reason, the policy of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture emphasizes increasing in-service training for teachers. The following are the main features of this policy:

1) Financial aid for in-service training activities

When prefectures and big cities hold in-service training programmes described below, national financial aid is provided for the activities.

a) Training programme for newly-employed teachers

All newly-employed teachers must attend a 20-day in-service training course (10 days of general training, and another 10 days of training in classroom procedure). The national government provides financial support for this programme.

b) In-service training for experienced teachers

The national government provides financial aid to prefectural boards of education by subsidizing a 10-day in-service training programme for teachers with five years of teaching experience.

c) Aid to private educational research organizations

Various kinds of private organizations conducting research on education are aided by the provision of funds to meet expenses for study meetings, research, and publication activities.

d) Aid to teacher research groups

Groups of teachers carrying out research receive financial support from the government.

e) In-service training for teachers who teach subjects they are not qualified to teach.

In small lower secondary schools, some teachers handle subjects they are not qualified to teach. There is an in-service training course for such teachers and the government subsidies this programme.

2) In-service training for principals and key personnel

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture provides a 4-week in-service training course held eight times a year for principals and key personnel.

3) Overseas in-service training

Every year, about 5,000 teachers travel abroad under two programmes supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, one for thirty days and the other for sixteen days.

4) Course on improving the enforcement of the curriculum

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture conducts such courses in three places located at three convenient places in the country.

5) Training courses in practical skills

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture organizes courses to train teachers in practical skills in Music, Fine Arts, and Physical Education, as well as those in the use of educational equipment.

After taking the above-mentioned courses, teachers serve as leading personnel at their school or in the local district. In addition to these in-service training courses, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture publishes manuals on the Course of Study, as well as a handbook and reference data for teachers. These materials have been quite helpful to teachers.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present situation of school education has been described in terms of revisions of the Course of Study, which is used as the standard curriculum. A description was also given of the way the revisions have been enforced at school, as well as of in-service teacher training to ensure enforcement. Section I presented an outline of the school education system and the procedure of curriculum compilation as a basic aspect of school curriculum affairs in Japan. The role of the Course of Study as the national standard

curriculum was also described. In Section II, to facilitate better understanding of the present Course of Study, the principles and the major changes of the past four revisions of the Course of Study were described. Section III described the principles and objectives of the present Course of Study. Section IV was devoted to showing how the new Course of Study has been enforced at elementary schools and the results of a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture were also presented. Section V explained how the prefectural and local boards of education help schools organize an acceptable curriculum by providing instructions and advice. Finally, in Section VI, the importance of in-service training was shown in regard to the effective enforcement of the Course of Study. To illustrate how the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is coping with this matter, the Ministry's policy concerning in-service training courses was outlined. Each school is required to make further efforts for more successful enforcement of the principles of the new Course of Study by carrying out research and putting the findings into practice.